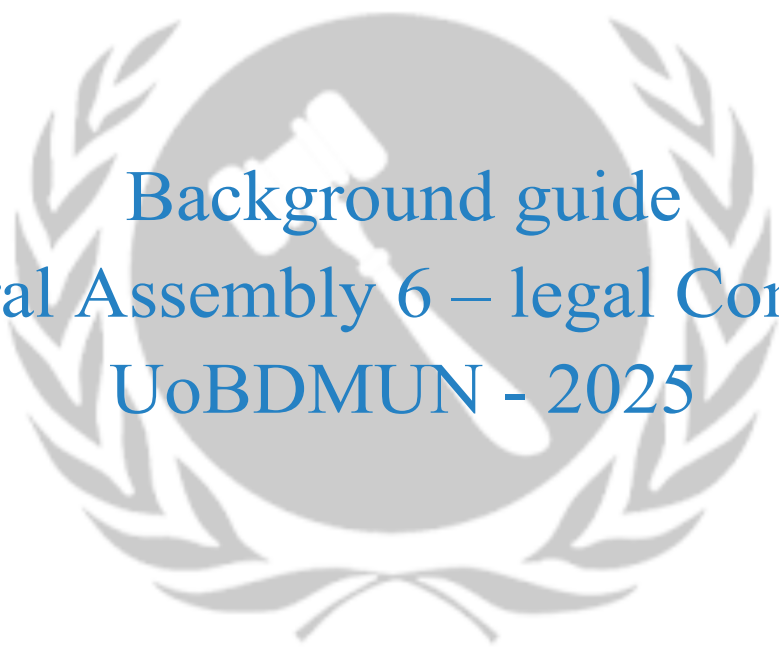




UoBDMUN

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Background guide
General Assembly 6 – legal Committee
UoBDMUN - 2025

Welcome Letter

Esteemed Delegates,

We are ecstatic and beyond thrilled to welcome you to the The United Nations General Assembly Sixth Committee (GA6). As the moderators of this distinguished committee, both the chairs would like to experience our deep welcome and excitement for the conference we are going to be engaging in.

During UoBDMUN, you will come together alongside other delegates to delve into meaningful conversations and debates regarding issues across several different nations. Hopefully, you will be able to realize not only the previous strides of development, but the future steps towards global peace and security.

Your MUN experience and journey will involve debating issues, conversing in concerns, and bridge building between nations and organizations to ensure the formation of solutions.

As chairs, we are here to mentor you and support you in this edition of UoBDMUN. Both chairs are here to help engage you in debates, provide answers to any of your concerns, and ensure that you not only try your best in this conference, but also enjoy it to the maximum.

We only ask of you to come in dedicated to your work, creative with your ideas, and most importantly, passionate to debate and converse with other delegates. Hopefully, this guide will be a crucial resource as an initial form of research that both explains and strengthens your ideas around the issues at hand. We encourage you heavily to do your own research, craft your own new resolutions, and work hard to ensure you are well researched.

By collaborating, we can ensure a beneficial outcome to all the endangered individuals whose human rights face crisis on a day-to-day basis. Your solutions will act as a beacon of light and a cooperative effort to ensure the protection and equity of the people across multiple nations. We wish you the best of luck.

Best Regards,

Mehdi Ibn Moussa & Amir Abu Fasheh

Introduction

Sanctions, a powerful tool in international diplomacy, have become increasingly prevalent in shaping global behaviour and maintaining international peace and security. As of 2025, over 40 different sanctions regimes are in place within the European Union alone, ranging from asset freezes and travel bans to trade restrictions and arms embargoes. These measures are designed to promote international peace, prevent conflicts, support democracy and human rights, and uphold the principles of international law.

The United Nations Security Council, empowered by Chapter VII of the UN Charter, plays a crucial role in imposing sanctions that all member states must comply with. However, the implementation and consequences of sanctions raise complex legal and ethical questions that demand careful consideration by the international community.

The legal basis for sanctions is primarily rooted in international law and the charters of various international organizations. While the UN Security Council and the European Union have established frameworks for imposing sanctions, the legality of unilateral sanctions, particularly those with extraterritorial effects, remains a subject of intense debate. Critics argue that such measures may violate fundamental principles of international law, including state sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs.

Ethically, sanctions present profound dilemmas. While intended to pressure targeted regimes, they often result in unintended humanitarian consequences, potentially causing significant suffering among civilian populations. The selective application of sanctions by powerful states further complicates their perceived legitimacy, raising critical questions about international justice and equitable enforcement.

Discussions over the effectiveness of sanctions have been rekindled by certain states' capacity to get around them. Particularly in an increasingly interconnected global economy, ensuring consistent compliance and efficient enforcement across all UN member states continues to be a major challenge. Furthermore, there is still a critical need to strike a balance

between the need to safeguard human rights and reduce humanitarian damage and the use of sanctions as a foreign policy weapon.

There is a growing recognition of the need for clearer international legal frameworks governing the use of sanctions, particularly regarding unilateral measures and secondary sanctions. As the global community becomes more interconnected, the extraterritorial effects of sanctions have become more pronounced, raising questions about their legality and impact on third-party states and entities.

Therefore, it is crucial to find innovative solutions to strengthen global efforts towards more effective and ethical use of sanctions. Recent high-level meetings at the United Nations have emphasized the importance of revitalizing international commitment to responsible sanction regimes. Ensuring transparency and compliance from all nations remains a significant challenge in the pursuit of a more just and effective sanctions system, therefore it is very important for nations to cooperate in this matter.

History

Economic sanctions emerged as a powerful tool in international diplomacy during World War I, where the most comprehensive attempt at an embargo occurred during the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-1815. Emperor Napoleon I of France promulgated the Continental System in 1806, forbidding European nations from trading with the United Kingdom. This idea of using coordinated economic pressure to enforce international law gained traction and was discussed by diplomats and legal scholars at the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.

The modern history of sanctions began to take shape after World War I, with the establishment of the League of Nations. The League incorporated sanctions as a tool to underpin peace between nations. Sometimes, these sanctions were effective, such as deterring Yugoslavia from going to war against Albania and Greece from military action against Bulgaria.

After World War II, the United Nations replaced the League in 1945, and the use of sanctions gradually increased throughout the Cold War. The post-Cold War era saw a major increase in the implementation of economic sanctions. According to the Global Sanctions Data Base, there have been 1,325 sanctions in the period 1950-2022.

Notable instances of sanctions include those imposed by the United States, Britain, the Republic of China, and the Netherlands against Japan in 1940-1941 in response to its expansionism. This led to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, triggering the American entry into the Pacific War.

In the 21st century, sanctions have continued to play a crucial role in international politics. For instance, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia became subject to numerous international economic sanctions, becoming the most sanctioned country in the world with approximately 13,000 sanctions as the war entered its second year. These sanctions aimed to limit Russia's ability to conduct business in dollars and euros abroad, fundamentally reshaping the country's economy.

The effectiveness of sanctions has varied throughout history. They were relatively effective tools of foreign policy in the first two decades after World War II, achieving their stated goals in nearly half the cases. However, their success rate has fluctuated over time, and their implementation continues to raise complex legal and ethical questions in the international community.

Analysis

The United Nations reports that economic sanctions have become an increasingly prevalent tool in international relations, with over 1,325 sanctions implemented between 1950 and 2022. These sanctions are distributed among various nations and international organizations, with the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations Security Council being the most prolific users. Each of these entities has long-term strategies for employing sanctions as a means of influencing global behaviour. However, the effectiveness of sanctions remains a subject of debate, with their success rate fluctuating over time and their implementation raising complex legal and ethical questions in the international community.

There are numerous regional and international conventions and agreements that provide the framework for imposing and implementing sanctions. The United Nations Charter, particularly Chapter VII, empowers the Security Council to impose sanctions that all member states must comply with. The effectiveness of sanctions varies widely, with some studies suggesting a success rate of around 30% for targeted sanctions, while others estimate the effectiveness "in the strict sense" at as low as 4%.

Nations that have been subject to sanctions but persisted in their targeted behaviour have often faced escalating penalties. Russia, following its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, became the most sanctioned country in the world, with approximately 13,000 sanctions imposed as the war entered its second year. These sanctions aimed to limit Russia's ability to conduct business in dollars and euros abroad, fundamentally reshaping the country's economy. However, Russia has responded with countersanctions and efforts to become more self-sufficient, potentially limiting the long-term effectiveness of these measures.

The international community has repeatedly called for more nuanced and targeted approaches to sanctions. The United States and its allies claim that their sanctions regimes have become more sophisticated and targeted over time. According to one study, sanctions regimes targeting a key export sector of the target country have a success rate of 54%, compared to an average success rate of 18% for all sanctions combined.

The effectiveness of sanctions remains a key point of debate in international relations. While some experts emphasize the potential of sanctions to influence behaviour without resorting to military action, others highlight their potential negative consequences, including humanitarian impacts and the risk of strengthening targeted regimes. Non-sanctioning states often focus on these negative impacts, while sanctioning states emphasize the necessity of sanctions as a tool of foreign policy.

The most significant challenge in the use of sanctions remains balancing their effectiveness with their humanitarian and economic costs. Many experts argue that future research should take a broader, more interdisciplinary approach when assessing sanction effectiveness, considering not only their primary objectives but also their secondary and tertiary effects. As geopolitical tensions continue to evolve, the debate over the use and effectiveness of sanctions is likely to remain a central issue in international relations.

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Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. How can the international community ensure that sanctions are implemented in compliance with international law and human rights standards?
2. What mechanisms can be established to assess and mitigate the humanitarian impact of comprehensive economic sanctions on civilian populations?
3. How can the effectiveness of sanctions be improved while balancing their foreign policy objectives with ethical considerations and potential unintended consequences?

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Historical development and effectiveness of economic sanctions, including case studies of major sanction regimes and their outcomes.
2. Legal frameworks governing the use of sanctions in international law, including UN Charter provisions and the role of the Security Council.
3. Ethical considerations and humanitarian impacts of comprehensive economic sanctions, particularly on civilian populations in targeted countries.

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